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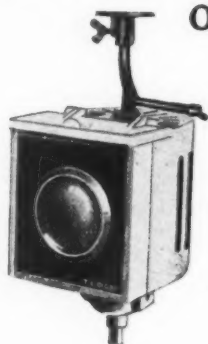
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DRAMA

VOL. VI

JUNE MCMXXVIII

NUMBER

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

By Percy Allen

THE past month has added to my theatrical experiences several plays of great, and greatly varied, interest, two or three of which, in particular, I look back to with peculiar delight. Prominent among these was Tchekov's "The Cherry Orchard," when the—or is it a—Moscow Art Theatre company, in the party scene especially, presented a striking example of their perfect efficiency in teamwork, while one individual actor, M. Pavloff, gave us, as the aged Firs, the most closely observed and truthfully executed study of senility that I remember to have seen upon any stage. But a play that I enjoyed even more—and which strangely recalls the Russian piece in its power to evoke, with equal clarity, though by wholly different technical methods, the same atmosphere of cosmic calm behind the surface discords—was a production at the Everyman Theatre of that delightful old melodrama (1837), "The Dumb Man of Manchester," with Mr. Campbell Gullan doing admirably well the miming part, which—because genuine actors always enjoy solid acting—is associated with many famous stage names. The producer, Mr. Malcolm Morley—aided, I believe, by Mr. Chance Newton, who understands better than any other living Englishman the right manner of presenting Victorian melodrama—did not commit, as Mr. Playfair did at Hammersmith, with "George Barnwell," the mistake of intentionally burlesquing a play that, nowadays, will inevitably burlesque itself; but told his company to interpret it sincerely and quite "straight," which they did, thereby giving us a double

delight; for though we laughed long, on such lines as "I will now carry a ray of consolation and hope to the dungeon of innocence," we felt, the while—as did the actors also—the pure emotion of right triumphant, chiming through the naïvely stilted words; and were given, at the same time, another vindication of the sound principle that all period plays should be acted as closely as possible within the convention for which they were written.

"The Dumb Man" did not receive nearly as much public support as it deserved; and the same remark applies to another extremely interesting production—that of "Hamlet," in the first quarto version, at the Rudolf Steiner Hall, by our veteran Shakespearean expert, Mr. Ben Greet. These birthday performances—insufficiently noticed by critics and press alike—were most intelligently produced by Mr. Greet, sufficiently well acted, and proved extremely interesting if only as showing us authentically the form in which "Hamlet" was abridged and mutilated—surreptitiously, I suppose—by some of Shakespeare's contemporaries, possibly for performance in the provinces. The purple passages, soliloquies, and the gloriously poetical rhetoric, that, in Gabriel Harvey's phrase, pleased "the wiser sort," are shorn or eliminated, leaving behind the stark tragedy of revenge, that is still the best melodrama in the world.

A modern episodic play of Shakespeare's period, "Queen Elizabeth," by W. G. Hole, has some good scenes, several passages of distinguished blank verse, certain lines of undistinguished

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

comedy, and an effective acting title-part, in which Miss Nancy Price revealed once more her distinct individuality as a character actress, and proved that she understood Elizabeth, by declining resolutely to accept the author's closing stage direction, that the queen should be publicly overcome by emotion upon hearing of Leicester's death.

Concerning Sir Barry Jackson's production of Shakespeare, in modern dress, I have written, and said, some severe things, because I firmly believe that such methods introduce anomalies far more

serious than any that they can ever remove; but there is no gainsaying that "The Taming of the Shrew," thus rendered by Mr. H. K. Ayloff, makes a thoroughly amusing entertainment. It is a production fertile in contrivance; and if the poetry, as usual, loses, the wit seems often to gain. Another light bill-of-fare that we owe to Sir Barry Jackson is John Drinkwater's "Bird in Hand," a piece of work very slight in texture, but adroitly filled out by trained stage-craft and mature literary skill into an acceptable evening's beguilement.

IS POETIC DRAMA DEAD ?

An Answer to Mr. Berrisford by Elsie Fogerty

THE Drama, as we know it, has existed in Europe for approximately 2,500 years. Till about 150 years ago, no one seriously believed that tragic or sublime drama could be achieved in any form but that of verse. In its earlier form of Greek tragedy, the dialogue of such plays achieved a conciseness, a capacity for sustained emotion, a universality of appeal, a capacity for giving to familiar situations a concentration of suspense, which has never been approached in any form of dramatic writing. In a word, it exhibited just all the characteristics Mr. Berrisford denies to poetry, which, indeed, he appears to consider only in its lyric forms.

The divorce between literature and drama in the nineteenth century was not due to the inherent unfitness of poetry as a medium for drama; it was due to social and economic causes weighing on the theatre. When the little band of eighteenth-century men, which includes Johnson, Goldsmith, Reynolds, and Garrick, attempted to negotiate the difficult passage from the close harbour of patronage to the open sea of popularity, it seemed as if all of them had, to a

certain extent, succeeded, almost it seemed as if Garrick had succeeded best of all. But the theatre is a costly art to practise. An author may achieve popularity whilst starving in a garret, but a company of players cannot starve collectively to impress the public.

In other countries, notably in France, the subsidy came in to effect what the patron no longer attempted, but in England a genuine religious movement placed the theatre outside the range of those activities which a well-ordered State might endeavour to promote. At the same time, the growth of democracy peremptorily demanded the development of an enormous scheme of national education, and during the development of this organization, for moral and disciplinary reasons, the ordered and compulsory growth of group games made Sport, not Art, the leisure occupation of our more intellectual citizens.

In the same hundred years which saw this accomplished, the novel became the chief literary expression of England. Two, at least, of our novelists, Thackeray and Dickens, attempted the theatre. What theatre they found around them, their novels tell us. It had

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sunk again into futility, as it always sinks when the actor is under religious, social or intellectual ban. Dickens was passionately devoted to the theatre. Almost all his scanty leisure was spent in amateur theatricals, and in the absence of any theatre where he could have learnt his craft as a dramatist, he became himself author, manager, producer and cast, in his marvellous public readings.

The cheapest way in which a theatre can attract, is by the glorification of the personality of a star actor or actress. This can take the place of good plays, well-trained companies, costly scenery, intelligent production, and even expensive publicity. Along this least line of resistance, the theatre of the nineteenth century mainly moved. Browning tried constantly and persistently to become a dramatist, but there was no theatre in which he could have learnt his craft, even if his earlier nonconformist surroundings would have allowed him to go and become an actor—the only sure way for a poet to achieve greatness in the theatre.

To dogmatize against the future of poetic drama in the formal sense, is rash, and it is one of those prophecies which unfortunately tends to bring about its own fulfilment. But it is only fair to say that in the last 150 years the experiment has not been soundly made by a man of the theatre, if we except the exquisite "Prunella" of Housman and Barker. Stephen Phillips was an actor, but the promise of his "Paolo and Francesca" was blighted by theatrical influences of the wrong kind, and he had not the strength to resist and come through. If we achieve a national theatre, or even if one company of players reacts against the present chaos, we may know whether the lyric revival of the neo-Georgians will be followed by a revival of dramatic poetry, as has happened in the past.

If one company to-day could become possessed of a London theatre at a reasonable price, play together, not repertory, but runs after the fashion of those in the Bancroft, Hare and Kendal regimes, giving to their theatre a stable character, and retaining the services of one group of trained players long enough to acquire easy team work and to act as an inspiration to young dramatists to write for them, we might regain to-day some of the conditions which make for the renewed expression of poetic drama.

[In our next issue we shall print a further article on this subject specially contributed by Mr. Gordon Bottomley. —EDITOR.]

LETTER TO THE EDITOR PLAYS IN AUSTRALIA

DEAR SIR,—It is to be regretted that Mrs. Leo Myers, whilst at the Antipodes, was given no opportunity to be present at the performance of an Australian play. In her article "Repertory at the Antipodes" she says: "Everywhere, as in England, one finds the same ardour for theatrical interpretation. . . . And yet, on their horizon, there looms no greater—or lesser—Australasian dramatist!"

Perhaps the reason is not so far to seek. I noticed in a recent number of DRAMA that Mr. Granville-Barker had something apropos the indifference exhibited by Britishers towards British playwrights. Yet English playwrights are occasionally heard of, even in Australia, while Australian dramatists, though alive, do not apparently exist either for their brothers overseas or in their native land. The truth is that it is easier and more profitable for even Repertory Theatres here to present work of those dramatists whose fame comes to Australia through the medium of the Press. I expect much the same happens in England, otherwise Mr. Granville-Barker would not have called attention to the fact.

Mrs. Myers's statement, "there looms no great Australasian dramatist," may be correct but there certainly are any number of "lesser Australasian dramatists" whose work would not disgrace their English brothers in the same class. It was to justify this faith in my countrymen that I suggested to you some little time back an exchange of plays, so that playlovers in England might judge for themselves the flavour of our drama, and we here might return the compliment.

Yours faithfully,
E. COULSON DAVIDSON

Victoria,
Australia

A DRAMA PARADISE

By Beatrice Marshall

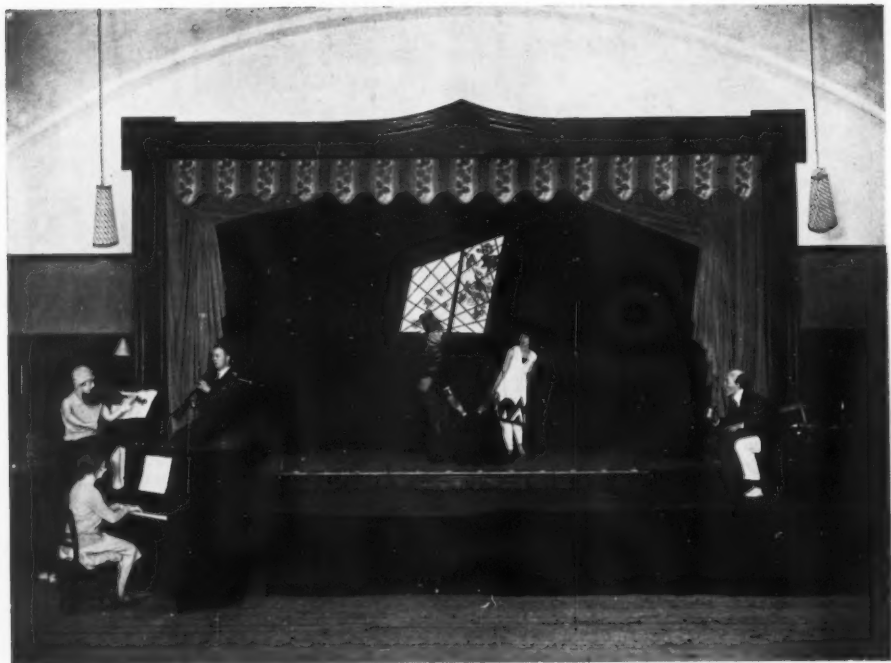
ANYONE who is still unconvinced of the elevating influence the Drama can exercise on the every-day life of a modern city, should take the Orient Express from Paris, via the Simplon Pass, get out at Zagreb, the whilom Agram of the Austrians, now the Croatian Capital of the new kingdom of Yugo-slavia. Little known to English travellers, this charming, historic and progressive town has many attractions. The Hotel Esplanade which has been recently erected near the station is on the latest American lines of luxury and comfort. The stranger, after a restful night and refreshing bath in this delightful hostel, will wander forth in a good temper to explore a terra-incognita unusual interest. He strolls, breathing a clean and smokeless air, along shady boulevards vying in elegance with those of Brussels and Paris. He will see entrancing shops, cinemas and cafés galore, but always keeps in view the twin lace-like spires of the Gothic Cathedral rising against the clear blue sky, with a range of violet hills in the background. Yet probably he will not get anywhere nearer the Cathedral the first morning than the market place, which presents an arresting scene of vivid colour and animated life perhaps unequalled anywhere else in Europe. For all the peasant vendors of cheese, butter, cream, and millions of eggs, onions and oranges wear the Croatian national costume in which are blended every colour of the futurist rainbow in embroideries so artistic that pink and scarlet, purple, green and yellow, instead of fighting agree together in perfect harmony. The visitor to Zagreb cannot fail to be lost in admiration of the beauty of the Croatian peasant women who walk like princesses through the crowded streets, balancing huge baskets on their gracefully poised heads. "If you have any plain women here you don't allow them to come out," remarked a Frenchman who, after a fortnight in Zagreb, declared he had not seen an ugly face the whole time or a pair of unshapely legs. The national dress in all its splendour is to be seen on the stage, when a performance is given of the quaint

country-fair ballet "The Gingerbread Heart." The work of a young Zagreb composer of genius, Kresimir Baronovič, who for a long time was one of the conductors of the theatre orchestra at Zagreb, but who has now been lured to Belgrade, the Serbian Capital and Zagreb's rival though still far behind her in culture and art.

The Zagreb National Theatre, architecturally perfect inside and out, was built thirty years ago when Croatia was subject to Austro-Hungary. But for the whole thirty years German was never heard on its stage till quite recently when the celebrated Burg Theatre of Vienna has sent a company of its leading artists to Zagreb for a series of "*Sast-Spiele*" which, instead of being coldly received, have excited the wildest enthusiasm. Perhaps now Verdi and Wagner will be sung in their respective native tongues instead of in Serb-Croatian that melodious Slav language which strongly resembles Russian, Polish and Czech, and is universally spoken in the land of the voluble Serbs Croats and Slovenes who are passionately patriotic and proud of their country. They are also habitual theatre-goers and the Zagrebers in every station of life go to the opera or play as regularly almost as they go to mass. Their National Theatre in the vale of the Silver Save, is as much the centre of the cultured social life of the town as the ancient Cathedral, with its Archiepiscopal Palace on the hill in the old world outskirts, is the centre of its religious life. Its position is ideal. It stands in an open square, surrounded by flower-beds and fountains amidst a group of stately modern buildings such as the University Library and the deeply interesting and artistically arranged Ethnological Museum. Most of these buildings were endowed by the scholarly Bishop Strossmayer, patron of the Arts in Zagreb, who dreamed and worked for the union of the three great Slav races into one kingdom long before it became, after the Peace of Versailles, a *fait accompli*. He bequeathed many rare works of art, among them a magnificent



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A DRAMA PARADISE

Van Dyke, to the city, and his colossal seated figure in bronze, one of the famous Croatian sculptor Mestrovic's masterpieces, was unveiled a year or two ago in front of the Academy of Arts. Another characteristic work of Mestrovic's is the powerful "*Fontaine de la Vie*" opposite the main entrance to the theatre. When one recalls the sordid and squalid surroundings of most of our London theatres, one cannot help being impressed by the almost classic calm and dignity which pervades the *entourage* of this comparatively small theatre in a far-away semi-oriental town.

Actors and actresses come and go to rehearsal with earnest brows, bent on serious study, like the University students. They mix with each other and there is often gaiety and innocent flirting and jesting at the little tables under the awning in front of the Theatre Café—a popular rendezvous—but stage-door and dressing-room erotics are here unheard of. The costumes, the scenery, the wigs, beards and eyebrows are all made on the premises, and the master tailor and the barber are as much an important part of the theatre personnel as the prompter and dressers.

The repertory, opera and drama, alternately, is kept going all the year round except in the holiday month of August. Every morning the playbill is posted up on the kiosques and the programme of performances for the week offers a fascinating choice. Sunday, maybe, it will be "*Carmen*," always superbly given at Zagreb; Monday, Shakespeare's "*Tempest*," Tuesday "*Boris Gudenov*" (with perhaps some great tenor, or even Chaliapin himself in the title-role as "guest," for most of the artists of European fame, singers, violinists, or pianists touch Zagreb on their way to and from the East). Zagreb welcomes warmly these distinguished guests, but as far as opera goes they possess enough native talent to give excellent all-round performances without their co-operation. It is a revelation, for instance, to hear Verdi's operas produced not as mere pegs on which to hang the local gymnastics of some famous prima donna, but as carefully and intelligently represented music dramas, with picturesque

scenery correct in every detail. But to return to the weekly programme, it is sure to contain one or more plays by either Strindberg, Wedikind, Begovic (the author of several remarkable Croatian dramas), Pirandello, Ibsen, Maughan, Shakespeare and Shaw. You may live till doomsday in London and never hear or see a third of the delightful and wonderful theatrical things you will enjoy in Zagreb if you live there for a year only.

Josip Papic, a really great actor, as great as David Garrick or Henry Irving, though we happen never to have heard of him, impersonated on the Zagreb stage for thirty years more than 500 rôles, many of them Shakespearean. He lived entirely in his art and never was married except on the stage, for as he used humorously to say, he hadn't time to make love anywhere else. His death not long ago at the age of 50, was universally deplored. The funeral was made the occasion of a remarkable demonstration of public mourning. He was followed to the grave not only by everyone who had anything to do with the theatre, but by nearly the whole population of Zagreb. His colleagues took leave of the dead actor in graveside orations, sometimes unable to control their emotion and even shedding tears. It was a spontaneous outburst of grief, showing how intimately associated the drama is with the life of a people easily moved to "pity and terror, to tears and laughter," and yet withal severely critical. Papic himself said that if an actor or actress was a success in the Croatian Capital they need not fear failure in other places. Zagreb audiences are fastidious and hard to please, but when they are pleased their enthusiasm knows no bounds. They reserve their applause till the very end of a performance and then it bursts forth like a veritable organ.

In connexion with the Zagreb National Theatre there is a Dramatic School where youth with histrionic talent can receive a sound training in acting, music and dancing. Though new blood is by this means often infused into the repertory cast it is never entirely recruited from this source. A bright star in the brilliant constellation of young actresses, Vika Podgorska probably would never have shone in the Zagreb

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firmament, or any other, had she not been discovered by a Zagreb actor who chanced to hear her read a part in one of Ibsen's plays at a private gathering in Trieste. This beautiful and gifted girl came of no acting family, cherished no dreams of "going on the stage" and was quite unconscious that she was a born actress till, to oblige her hostess, she read the part of Nora as a substitute for someone who had failed to put in an appearance. The actor, her Columbus, saw in her great possibilities. He was bewitched by her dark expressive eyes, her wonderful hands, and that quality which she has in common with the late Eleonora Duse "tears in the voice." She became his pupil, and later his wife, and made her debut on the Zagreb stage as Viola in Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night."

She is an industrious and conscientious artist, devoid of all affectation. And besides charm, she undoubtedly possesses genius. Extraordinarily original are her interpretations of characters differing so widely as Viola and Ariel, the Jewish heroine of the "Dybuk" and Shaw's "St.

Joan." The last is her favourite rôle and she has a devout admiration for the great G. B. S. Through the medium of an English journalist she sent him, a year or two ago, her photograph, as St. Joan of course. For weeks, even months, it was not acknowledged. The intermediary began to fear the worst. Perhaps Adelphi Terrace was so inundated with pictures of St. Joans from all parts of the globe that Vika's had been put aside, or overlooked altogether. The Yugo-slav St. Joan became resigned to her portrait being ignored, till one day the post brought her a communication, not typewritten but in Shaw's own infinitesimal handwriting enclosing a beaming photo of himself to show "how pleased and flattered" he was at Joan being this far-off young actress's favourite part. Thus tactfully he took the sting out of the remark with which his note began, "A beautiful lady, but *not a bit like St. Joan.*" It is easily understood how much more pleasure such a characteristic little letter gave the "beautiful lady" than a sheet full of barren compliments would have done.

A NOTE ON HAMLET AT THE OLD VIC.

By Lina Pariera

ON Saturday, April 21, the Old Vic. performed "Hamlet" in its entirety. Mr. Milton's Hamlet was a theatrical achievement; he received a laurel wreath somewhat in the manner of a Greek triumph at the finish and it seemed a fitting close to express the stimulation that surged through the audience. Mr. Milton's Hamlet was so aloof, so brooding, so mad, so suffering, so aspiring, so despairing, he used gesture so pictorially, giving joy to one's sense of design; he crouched, he stood, slim and static, impenetrable; he flung his actions wildly, unexpectedly; he lolled limply, he took centre stage with arms outstretched, dominating; he used voice for its sensuous sound, he was drawling with hauteur, with nonchalance, with insolence, vibrating with fear, with awe, with venom, sibilant with intensity, with grim enlightenment, with revulsion, in fact he made his voice an instrument to sound his gestures, and his gestures symbols to embody his emotions. He used himself as

a dramatic vehicle and so kindled sustained and kept alive that soul issue which Shakespeare has put into "Hamlet."

Mr. Milton serves his art equally well in lighter parts, as in that interesting and ambiguous one of Joseph Surface in "A School for Scandal," which gave him what I should like to call an elegant opportunity to be affected. Mr. Milton composed on this note his creation of Joseph Surface, and in that picturesque and sharply-witty Sheridan world how telling it was, how it conveyed and *pointed* the vitality that Sheridan unlocked into his play.

Just to touch two more parts played by Mr. Milton, there was his Shylock, which was reptilian, bitter, down-trodden, scurriulous, *seething*. And his Mercutio, in "Romeo and Juliet," tremendously courageous, vibrant, and tonic. Yes, he is a fine actor, he delights, enthalls, captures by his inspiration. The drama lives through such exponents; I hope to see him expressing many many moods and aspects of it.

THE ART OF THE THEATRE IN A REMOTE COUNTRY TOWN

By S. Freda Paynter

THE little Cornish town of St. Ives is unique, not only in its unrivalled situation on a beautiful bay, but in the fact that unlike most small fishing towns—its population is somewhere about 7,000—it numbers among its inhabitants a very large proportion of travelled and cultured people. When we are bold enough to present a play in St. Ives, we have to cater for the unsophisticated, the intelligentsia and the half-educated. It is with this third class that our difficulties arise—with the people who say, "Why don't you do a farce. We want a good laugh!" There are several reasons why we avoid farce; the most cogent is perhaps that it requires very finished acting, and is likely to be a ghastly failure unless taken at a quicker tempo than most amateurs can manage. Also, we—the performers—get no pleasure out of farce; it leaves us cold, and we have, therefore, confined ourselves hitherto to comedy—light or otherwise.

The genesis of our Society was an attempt to raise money for a local distress fund in 1921. Greatly daring, we presented scenes from Shakespeare's "Richard II" and "Twelfth Night." Our efforts were so well received that we formed ourselves into a society in March, 1922. During the six years of our existence we have produced plays as widely different as Sheridan's "Critic," Barrie's "Twelve-Pound Look," and Cicely Hamilton's "Diana of Dobson's." Our most successful plays have been "Mr. Pim Passes By" (1924), "The Truth about Blayds" (1926), and "Dear Brutus" (1928). The first named is funny enough to go down easily with a mixed audience, but the wiseacres shook their heads over "The Truth about Blayds," declaring that it was too gloomy and too difficult for amateurs. We persevered, and it was an unqualified success: the audience listening spell-bound in the second act, where the arch-imposter is unmasked. There are difficulties in presenting such a play. It deals only with a small section of society

and its appeal is consequently a limited one, and it makes very heavy demands on the performers. But, in spite of the slight love interest, it is very absorbing to watch, and when we gave it members of the audience, between the acts, eagerly discussed the question of the right to sacrifice a daughter's happiness to her father's comfort—one of the points dealt with in the play—thus showing that they had followed the story with an interest flattering to the author and gratifying to the performers.

We have just given "Dear Brutus." Here again, for a society of twenty members, mostly women, we were audacious in our choice, but the result fully justified us. For two nights we gave performances to crowded and enthusiastic audiences. All the actors entered into the spirit of Barrie's delightful but exceedingly difficult play, and the delicate beauty and charm of the piece were subtly conveyed across the footlights.

Our six years' experience has taught us two important things. First that it is wise to aim high in the choice of a play. A poor play is not easier to produce than a good one, and if it is badly done there are no redeeming features, whereas with a good play, however bad the performers are, they cannot entirely spoil the beauty of the lines or the cleverness of the plot.

Secondly, we have learnt that audiences have a sound literary instinct, and would probably be secretly disappointed if we gave them less than the best.

We make no pretence of being "high-brow"—whatever that may mean—but we do try to act up to our belief that amateurs should present the very best work suitable for their purpose in the very best way they are capable of doing it, instead of pandering to the desire of the loud-voiced minority for amusement pure and simple. By following out this precept amateur dramatic societies may become a power for good throughout the length and breadth of the land.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF

THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

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Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.

CONGRATULATIONS must be offered to the Ardrossan and Saltcoats Players' Club on their securing the David Belasco Cup in the American Little Theatre Tournament in New York. All who saw their production of "The Old Lady Shows Her Medals," whether in the Scottish Area Festival in Glasgow or, later, in the National Festival Final in London, must have felt that the Players had a very good chance of success, and it was, no doubt, this feeling which enabled the Society to raise the very considerable sum of money which was necessary to finance the American venture. There is, however, all the difference between a "very good chance" and the ultimate event. Scotland and, may we add, Great Britain will be very proud of the Ardrossan Players for so finely upholding the tradition established last year by the Welwyn Garden City Theatre Society.

We call special attention to the announcement in this number of the Annual General Meeting of the League on June 29 in the Library. The Autumn Conference has

assumed a more popular attraction to members than the Annual Meeting, owing partly to the fact that it is held in the Provinces, and also to the other events with which the Conference is associated. Nevertheless the Annual Meeting is of great importance to the actual machinery of the League's organization, and we hope that all members who possibly can will make a point of being present.

We are able to announce that the British Section of the Universal Society of the Theatre, which works under the auspices of the British Drama League, has arranged that Mr. Leon M. Lion shall represent Great Britain at the International Festival to be held in Paris during June and July. Last year, it will be remembered, Miss Sybil Thorndike and her company appeared in Paris at the Festival in "Saint Joan." This year Mr. Lion's company will perform two or more plays by John Galsworthy at the Odeon Theatre. The French public will have the chance of seeing a first-class English company in modern English plays, and the British Committee is much indebted to Mr. Lion for his public-spirited acceptance of its invitation. The performances will open in Paris on Sunday, June 24, and will continue during that week. We would ask all our members who may be in Paris at that time, or who have friends in Paris, to make this event known, and thus help in ensuring full houses.

Although the life work of Sir Edmund Gosse was mainly related to studies far removed from the world of the theatre, his early connexion with the Ibsen movement in this country demands that we should pay our tribute to his memory. Ibsen's name was first introduced to England by Sir Edmund Gosse, and we remember gratefully his kindness in inaugurating the Drama League Course of Lectures on Ibsen's life and work at the Royal Society of Arts, within a few months of his death. A certain frailty of aspect was noticeable on that occasion, but one felt that advancing years had done nothing to dim the fire and enthusiasm which were the essential characteristics of this great man of letters.

RECENT BOOKS

Reviewed by Norman Marshall

- "Twelve Thousand." By Bruno Frank. "Chicago." By Maurine Watkins. Knopf. 4s. 6d. each.
 "Mrs. Fitzherbert." By Shane Leslie. "The Trouble Factory." By Eric Blom. Benn. 3s. 6d. each.
 "l'Aiglon." By Edmond Rostand. Translated by Basil Davenport. Yale and Oxford. 13s. 6d.
 "The Fountain Head." By Ashley Dukes. Gollancz. 3s. 6d.
 "The Pipe in the Fields." By T. C. Murray. Allen and Unwin. 3s. 6d.
 "The Crown of St. Felice" and "The Sacred Cat." By F. Sladen-Smith. Gowans and Gray. 1s. each.

THE two plays at the head of this month's list are the first of a new series edited by George Jean Nathan "in which will be published from time to time those new plays of American and European authorship that, in the opinion of the editor, are of significance in the development of modern drama." Obviously the value of a series with this aim must largely depend upon the editor having a singularly catholic taste, with no special bias towards realism or expressionism or symbolism or naturalism or constructivism or suggestivism or any of the hundred and one other isms over which the critics are at present haggling. Judging from "Twelve Thousand" and "Chicago," the editorship of the series is in safe hands. The two plays are complete contrasts in every way. It is difficult to define the peculiar excellence of "Twelve Thousand." The situations are not particularly original or dramatic, the dialogue is of no special quality, the character drawing is conventional enough, the technique perfectly straightforward. I suppose the charm of the play lies in its perfect balance, in the sheer excellence of the craftsmanship. To quote Mr. Nathan's preface, "in the midst of the pervading Tollerism and Unruhism, for all their periodic virtues, in the midst of the prevailing welter of Drehbühne and Treppenbühne drama, for all its periodic virtue in turn; a play as tranquilly evolved and as artlessly composed as this has the air of a sudden violin in a jazz hullabaloo." With "Chicago" we are back to the jazz hullabaloo. Never was there a play with quite so much hullabalooing. It is a riotous, racing, shouting, full-blooded play, written with all the tremendous gusto of burlesque and a great deal of the keen penetration of pure satire. It is often crude enough stuff, but it is exhilaratingly original, with an originality that is the outcome of a fresh and lively attitude towards life, instead of merely the result of stunting with a new technique to distract attention from the platitudinous quality of the thought beneath it all.

After these two plays Mr. Shane Leslie's "Delightful, Diverting, and Devotional Play of Mrs. Fitzherbert" seemed irritatingly mannered and precious. However, it is a play which gives plenty of opportunities for pageantry and picturesque producing, so possibly the colour and movement of

the production would conceal some of the puppet-like qualities of the chief characters, whose struttings and posturings often seems very forced and lifeless on the printed page.

"The Trouble Factory" is not a good play, and yet I read every sentence of it with unflagging interest. The story straggles badly, the characters are conventional types, the technique often rather crude, the theme altogether too petty to be worth a play, but the author has the gift of writing dialogue that is unfailingly interesting, the sort of dialogue which, taken line by line, is ordinary enough, and yet always keeps one anxious to know what the next speaker is going to say. I would rather see this play in the theatre than hosts of plays which from every other point of view are vastly superior to it.

Mr. Davenport and the Yale Press have both done their best for Rostand's magnificently theatrical play. The printing is a model of how a play should be printed, especially in the method of setting out the stage directions, and Mr. Davenport in his translation has succeeded in making the artificialities of the dialogue sparkle and glitter without ever allowing them to look tawdry and garish as they might so easily have become in the less sympathetic light of the English language.

I have not been able to make up my mind about Mr. Ashley Dukes's new play. It is an exquisitely finished piece of work, flecked here and there with moments of rare beauty, but in print it seems on the whole somewhat cold and lifeless. Still, it would be rash to judge the work of so experienced a man of the theatre from the printed page, and it is possible that Mr. Dukes has created a perfectly formed mould, leaving producer and actors to pour life into it.

The theme of "The Pipe in the Fields" is one of those sentimentally romantic themes with a hint of the strange and the supernatural which are the stock-in-trade of Irish writers. A poet might still make us forget how threadbare it has been worn, but Mr. Murray, lacking poetry, falls back upon muted strings and a spirit dancing in a green light. "Birthright," the other one-act play in the book, is the revised version of an early play. Characterization and dialogue have all the qualities of the author's best work, but the tragic climax of the play does not grow naturally out of the theme. It has the air of a violent ending superimposed upon a play which the author felt to be insufficiently dramatic.

Mr. Sladen-Smith's "The Crown of St. Felice" is already well known enough through its performance by the Oxted and Limpsfield Players at the final of the Festival of Community Drama. It is one of the best of the author's plays, and, like most of them, it would be better still if it were shorter. I will confess that at first I wrote "like all of them," but then I read "The Sacred Cat." A play could hardly be briefer than this witty original jest.

A SIMPLE LIGHTING SET

I HAVE been asked to describe the very simple lighting set used at the Easter School for Producers. It is designed for small halls where there are no facilities for stage lighting. The cost of the set, with six lamps and a switch-board, without paid labour or the actual bulbs, should be about £5. A dimmer can be added for 10s., but for this I should recommend reading first a book on practical electric wiring and then Mr. Harold Ridge's "Stage Lighting for 'Little' Theatres," to which I am very greatly indebted.

The materials required for the lamps are: six half-size biscuit tins; two or three sheets of tin (6d. each); 15 ft. of $\frac{1}{2}$ in. by 2 in. wood; $\frac{1}{2}$ in. and 2 in. nuts and bolts; gas piping and flanges, stiff cardboard; six cord grip lamp holders fitted for shades; 5 amp. double vulcanized workshop flex (from Messrs. Thomas Digby, Gerrard Street, London, W.1.).

Cut three strips of tin, $2\frac{1}{2}$ ins. by about $9\frac{1}{2}$ ins., and three more 2 ins. by $9\frac{1}{2}$ ins., and bend them into the shape of an L with all the short arms 1 in. long. Take one of each and bolt the long arms to the sides and bottom of the tin, with one flat against the edge, A, and the other half an inch forward, B, to make a slot for the mediums. Bore some holes, and cover them with tin cowls, bolted on, at C and D for ventilation. Cut a round hole at E in which to insert the lamp holder. Screw it in, after connecting up the flex, as if the tin were a shade.

The stand explains itself. F is a wooden frame of sufficient size for the lamp to be adjusted to any angle. G is a small piece of wood, and H a nut; and bolt, with the nut outside, run through

into the tin. The lamp can then be screwed or tied to any convenient upright, or it can be used with a stand of gas piping, J, screwed into flanges at K and L (and therefore easily dismantled). The base can be either a box, M, filled with sand, or a piece of heavy oak.

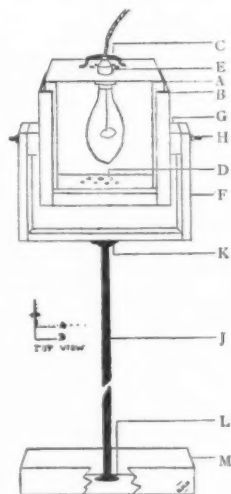
A footlight can be made by using a tin about 10 ins. by 6 ins., and cutting off a sloping section from one side (so that the light throws partly upwards). The shape is then that of a right angle triangle. Screw the holder into one end, and fit slots as before.

The mediums (shade card obtainable from Digby's) should be placed in frames made from two pieces of cardboard cut to fit the slots, joined at the edges with adhesive tape, and with a square cut out in the centre, leaving a border of one inch.

The switchboard must be made by an electrician, whether amateur or professional. It consists of four

circuits of two plugs and switches each, connected up to the main through fuses. If the current must be taken from lamp holder adaptors, divide the board into two sections, and connect up each by short lengths of cable to connectors (two pin 5 amp. connectors). Then the leads can be plugged in when required, instead of keeping them always attached to the board. If there is a suitable plug the whole board can be connected through it, but not more than 5 amps. should be taken from it. The set is designed only for 100 watt. gas-filled lamps. It is advisable to find out any local regulations as to cable, switchboards, etc., before going to work.

NANCY HEWINS



NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

THE DARLINGTON AMATEUR REPERTORY COMPANY

The Darlington Amateur Repertory Company did not attempt a particularly easy task in their recent production of Noel Coward's "Hay Fever." It is a play full of difficulties for any but the most finished professional, requiring a lightness, polish, and a certain verve by no means always characteristic of the amateur movement. Badly acted, "Hay Fever" would be a bore, and sometimes almost unintelligible. It says much for the actors and producer that this presentation of the play was, without doubt, a convincing success. The cast had obviously been carefully selected and, on the whole, fitted their parts admirably. The playing was rather hard and strident and lacking in subtlety, but the ensemble was eminently satisfactory, one of the best features being the pace. Many amateurs still lag dreadfully, take up their cues with exasperating slowness and cut their laughs. Not so the Darlington Company. The playing was brisk, smart and crisp. Soon after the curtain rose, it was obvious that the actors were capable of giving a good account of themselves, and this atmosphere of confidence increased the enjoyment of the evening.

The part of Judith Bliss was taken by Miss Lilian Randall with a sureness of attack that made one forget the many difficulties the part possesses—difficulties which Miss Randall skilfully evaded rather than surmounted. Most of the cast managed to be convincing without moments of definite inspiration; but as Clara, Mrs. Guthrie Liddiard was wholly delightful, while the part of Jackie Coryton was most excellently done by Miss N. Sowerby. Mr. J. Blumer and Mr. E. A. G. Liddiard also contributed sound work.

The setting could have been simpler with advantage. A setting which it is necessary to forget as much as possible is no help to any play; but, apart from this, all congratulations are due to Mrs. Guthrie Liddiard, the producer. As an evening's entertainment the show could hardly have been bettered. What would be the result if so excellent a producer and company attempted a more serious and ambitious play? On the answer to this question depends the future of the Darlington Amateur Repertory Company. In "Hay Fever" they presented a play of no particular significance, they attempted no experiment likely to help on the amateur movement, but they achieved—in its own particular way—a brilliant piece of work.

F. SLADEN-SMITH

THE CITY PLAYERS

The City Players gave a very spirited performance of Piner's "Trelawny of the Wells" at the Cripplegate Institute on Thursday, May 3. Piner has always seemed to me a difficult problem for amateurs. He cannot be treated in the stylized fashion of acting which is needed for Goldsmith and Sheridan, yet his characters seem further removed from the modern stage people than theirs are. The City Players managed excellently. They had just

the right amount of artificiality which, though it tended at times to degenerate into shouting, was on the whole the only means of tackling the play. The production was well-timed, crisp without being rushed, and the stage management was very much above the average. The only adverse criticism is for the lighting which began well but was so unnecessarily dim in the second act that the expressions on the faces of the artists were entirely lost.

A. F.

THE OCCASIONAL PLAYERS

Continually during the performance of "Dear Brutus" at the Guildhall School of Music I found myself wishing it had been my good fortune to be present on the second night instead of the first; the improvement in acting as the play progressed was so general that I expect the second performance was very good indeed. First-night nervousness, that bane of the amateur, caused the production to resemble the classical curate's egg. The "excellent" parts were mainly the setting and stage-management (though why that clattering floor as one entered Lob's Wood?), Gwen Nutman's playing of Alice Dearth, Kenneth Sankey's merciful forbearance from overacting as Mr. Coade, and the performance of the Lavington Orchestra.

J. M. Barrie's fantasy is too well known to call for comment; it seems well suited to amateur requirements, in that it provides a large number of equal parts, with one or two outstanding ones. The Occasional Players began in the third act to do justice to the story, though through inexperience several members of the house-party took their tone from each other, producing a dead level effect; and if only amateurs would "bite their cues"! This does more than anything to produce an effect of natural conversation; on Tuesday evening I actually caught myself wondering whose turn it was to speak next!

Allan Martin Harvey and Molly Leuw were so exactly right as Will Dearth the artist and his dream-daughter Margaret that for a few transcendent moments they made even such a hardened playgoer as I forget I was watching a play. That is an achievement.

E. G. C.

ZODIAC DRAMATIC CLUB.

I missed the West-End production of "Hay Fever," so its performance at Streatham Congregational Hall was unspoiled for me; but, entertaining as this typical Coward play indisputably is, I am inclined to think it would be beyond the scope of the average amateur players. The members of the Zodiac Club, however, were successful in "getting over" its most subtle effects, and in the broader comedy parts they were equally at home. I do not know the extent of personnel the producer, W. A. D. Englefield, had from which to select his cast, but I have seldom seen better casting.

The whole performance was unusually even, giving an admirable effect of naturalness—which unfortunately was partially discounted by the usual failure to "bite cues." I have only one other quarrel to pick with this very efficient company; they must suit their tones better to the size of the

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

hall. In the prevailing loudness of speech the clear quiet voices of one or two, notably Gwen Wicks, came as something of a relief.

Most of the "fat" fell to Vera Mills as Judith Bliss, and she bore it as an actress of talent; except for a slight tendency to repeat her gestures and effects, her interpretation of an onerous rôle was excellent. But I must admit the performance that gave me greatest pleasure was that of Dora Griffiths as an empty-headed blonde. Her vacuous expression and mincing tone were so well sustained that I suspect depth of ability beneath their artlessness.

Altogether an enjoyable evening, and another proud feather in the Zodiac cap.

E. G. C.

MANCHESTER

The second and third productions of the Un-Named Society for this season were Tchegov's "Uncle Vanya," and a double bill comprising Clifford Bax's "Aucassin and Nicolette," and "The Man who wouldn't go to Heaven," by F. Sladen-Smith.

In the Tchegov play the Society made a somewhat fresh departure; which, in the opinion of the present writer, was a laudable one.

The Society has been largely given over, for many years, to plays of a distinctive type. Decidedly odd and unusual and intensely decorative, one may truly say that their continued and unquestionable successes in this style of thing have, to use a contradiction in terms, made them a name! However reasonably the artist and the wardrobe-mistress have become "parties of the play," and however often it will be argued that clothes "do make" the man or the woman, yet the costume, be it never so wisely designed, cannot make the play.

"Uncle Vanya" was a glorious venture and to the minds of some the loveliest thing the Society has attempted.

Performances of distinction were given by Eric Newton as Vanya, Mamie Nairn as Sonia, Paxton Chadwick as the Professor's wife, and G. Bernard Smith as Astrov the doctor. The exquisite costumes and settings were by Suzanne Hayward and the play produced by Eric Newton.

In "Aucassin and Nicolette" the Society returned to its own and anything more skilfully achieved in the carrying out of artistic design could hardly be imagined. The gorgeous back-cloth, done entirely by Godfrey Craven, was something quite unforgettable. The numerous and effective costumes were admirably contrived by Mamie Nairn.

F. Sladen-Smith's "The Man who wouldn't go to Heaven" was given for the first time and was remarkable both for its originality and for the success of its presentation.

The decoration was by Eric Newton and the play was produced by the author F. Sladen-Smith.

L. H.

THE SHOREDITCH DRAMA SOCIETY

The Shoreditch Drama Society gave a production of "Twelfth Night" in the hall of St. Peter's Church on Thursday, April 19. A very apt general criticism was overheard from two people in the audience: "Of course I don't understand much of

it, but then you know they aren't proper actors." It does not need professional actors to put a play over that is as good as "Twelfth Night," but the Shoreditch Drama Society failed its audience badly in not paying infinitely more attention to diction and to correct emphasis in phrasing. The whole production lacked the precision that is needed to hold a large and mixed audience. The best part of the production was the buffooning. Toby Andrew and the rest were "in excellent fooling," and the audience found no difficulty in understanding and appreciating them. Better use might have been made of the stage which was by no means small. The stage-management was excellent.

A. F. F.

THE CENTRAL EMPLOYMENT BUREAU DRAMATIC SECTION

The Dramatic Section of the Central Employment Bureau, 54 Russell Square, gave its inaugural performance at the Blackfriars Theatre on April 27 with Barrie's "Quality Street." The Society, founded only last January, is to be congratulated upon the well-earned success of its first venture, for although a number of the players had done little or no acting before, the results were the more pleasing for their spontaneity. Miss Kathleen Gilbey, as Phoebe Throssel, gave a finely balanced performance which lost none of the distinction between sympathy and gentleness; in Susan, Miss Margot Whittaker, particularly in her last act, played well, and J. Heddle, a truly dashing and imperious Valentine Brown, gave delightful gaiety to her part. It is to be hoped that the Bureau Dramatic Section will continue to do as hopefully as it has begun.

J. P.

NEW EARSWICK

The New Earswick Dramatic Society (York) concluded its season with "She Stoops to Conquer," for which charming costumes were made by lady members. These are available for hire on very reasonable terms by societies affiliated to the B.D.L. or V.D.S. on application to the Secretary, Mr. A. Pelmeare, New Earswick. They are really well made and finished and historically correct.

Other plays given were "The Dumb and the Blind" (Chapin), "Cox and Box" (Sullivan), "The Skin Game," "The Romantic Young Lady" (Sierra), "Major Barbara," "Followers" (Brig-house) and "The Owl" produced by the author, Mr. Hambling, and done by the Ebor Garrick Players.

There were 186 members and the Treasurer reports a satisfactory balance in hand.

C. W. S.

OXTED AND LIMSFIELD PLAY COMPETITION

The Oxted and Limpsfield Players are again holding their competition for an original one-act play which they propose to enter for the British Drama League National Festival of Community Drama this year. A prize of £5 is offered, and further particulars may be obtained from: Mrs. R. Seyd, c/o Mrs. Whitmore, Pilgrim's Hatch, Oxted, Surrey.



A SCENE FROM "LONESOME
LIKE" AS PRODUCED BY THE
STOCKPORT GARRICK SOCIETY



MISS EDITH CRAIG, MR. NORMAN
MARSHALL AND SOME STUDENTS
OF THE EASTER SCHOOL FOR
AMATEUR PRODUCERS.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

A ONE-ACT COMEDY

A one-act Somerset comedy entitled "Scissors for Luck," by Mrs. Howard Rowlands, has been read by the League's reader, and has received a very favourable criticism. We have a limited number of MSS. of this play for loan, and we shall be pleased to send a copy to any Affiliated Society making application for its loan.

BRISTOL

It was ambitious of the Folk House Players to stage "Pygmalion"—a feat they accomplished at the Folk House on April 19, 20, and 21. Eliza Doolittle and Professor Higgins and Mr. Albert Platten as Alfred came close to the line which divides amateurism from professionalism. Miss Mizen was even clever enough to make herself a wholly objectionable figure as the lachrymose flower girl. Somehow, though, she did not give quite the full effect to the sanguinary remark which immediately precedes the curtain of Act III.

Mr. Lavers expounded with skill the Shavian creed of the professor of phonetics, Eliza's self-constituted guardian; and the philosophic dustman, who is Eliza's father, could not have been in cleverer hands than Mr. Platten's.

In a foreword, Mrs. F. W. Rogers, who directed the production, explained that "Pygmalion" was written by Shaw partly to illustrate that difference of accent is the greatest factor in keeping alive class hostility.

In view of the numerous disadvantages of the tiny Folk House stage, Mr. Lavers deserves special thanks for his successful stage managementship.

THE BOWES PARK AMATEUR DRAMATIC SOCIETY

The Bowes Park Amateur Dramatic Society gave a performance of Barrie's "Dear Brutus" at the Blackfriars Theatre, on Tuesday, May 1.

The stage of the Blackfriars Theatre is not big but the producers of "Dear Brutus" treated it as though it were. There is a very distinct technique for small stages which could be learnt by producers if they would pay visits to some of the little theatres like Playroom Six, the Gate Theatre Salon. It is a more scientific business than managing a large stage. The production as a whole was badly timed. It was never quick enough and was very often jerky, especially in the beginning of the second act. It was perhaps this that accounted for the complete absence of any of Barrie's magic except in the scene between Margaret and Mr. Dearth in the wood. It is at best an elusive quality, but as it was caught in that one scene one felt that it was well within the powers of the Bowes Dramatic Society to do it again.

The acting was much sounder than the production. Especially good was that of Margaret Dearth, Mrs. Dearth and Mr. Purdie.

A. F. F.

THE PLAYFELLOWS

"Man and Superman" at the Cripplegate Theatre

To William Goff fell the Herculean task of coping with John Tanner's torrential flow of words. I have heard Tanners who ranted, Tanners who droned, Tanners who recited, Tanners elliptical to the point of originality, and Tanners merely wear-

some, but actors who can make the character live and breathe are few, and of this honourable company is William Goff.

Violet Durward as his opposite number, Ann Whitfield, conveyed cleverly the remorseless purpose behind her plaintive submissiveness, though I thought so skilled a player might have given a little more effect to some of the subtler lines. Ivy M. Holton as Mrs. Whitefield was almost convincing, and would have been quite had she greyed her hair. As it was, she looked thirty years too young. Sidney G. Crowder's Roebuck Ramsden was impressive; while Malone *père et fils*, though very much at home with their parts, spoke in such a distressing travesty of the great American language that an American friend who accompanied me (as deadhead) shed tears of happy laughter.

John W. Cannan may, however, on the whole be proud of his production; but my special thanks are reserved for a person whom I did not hear once during the entire performance—the Prompter!

E. G. C.

THE BECKENHAM PLAYERS

On April 20 and 21, the Beckenham Players gave the final performances of a season remarkable for a very interesting experiment along unusual lines. Last autumn this society broke away from the usual play-producing tradition and launched upon an ambitious additional programme of revues. These have been given at monthly intervals throughout the winter to rapidly increasing audiences, in addition to "full-dress" productions of the "Doctor's Dilemma" and "Henry V." The most praiseworthy feature of the experiment has been the considerable amount of new work produced and the facility offered for experimental work in staging and general production. Of the fifty-four items making up the programmes, no less than twenty-eight were original work.

The April production was in the nature of a "request" evening, the items being chosen by popular ballot from the season's work, and was entirely original material with the exception of Oliphant Down's "Maker of Dreams." Outstanding was the work of Mr. Sidney F. Rogers and Mr. Sydney Box, both of whom write remarkably well for young men scarcely out of their teens. Mr. Rogers writes a very facile lyric and his little musical comedy, "Little Fishes," was a delightful piece of satire, with three excellent airs. The *pièce-de-resistance* of the evening, however, was Mr. Box's "Whose Baby Are You?" a satire on the jazz age, with some amusing dialogue in the modern manner, broken up by four tiny dream scenes containing one or two excellent character studies. Some of the shorter items were also decidedly novel.

While it must be admitted that not all of the experiments during the season have proved as successful as those contained in this final programme, there can be no doubt that the unusual experience gained has been invaluable and has considerably widened the interest in drama in the Beckenham district. The Beckenham Players are already at work on their programme for next winter, when they open with three performances of "Peer Gynt," at one of which the play will be done in its entirety.

THE NINTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

To be presented at the Annual General Meeting to be held
at 8 Adelphi Terrace, on Friday, June 29, 1928, at 2.30 p.m.

IN submitting the ninth Annual Report of the British Drama League, the Council are happily able to report another year of progress. On June 30, 1927, the League's membership stood at 2,037. It is now 2,518; 679 new members have joined during the year. There have been 198 resignations. The net increase is, therefore, 481. The number of affiliated societies now on the register is 1,267.

NATIONAL FESTIVAL OF COMMUNITY DRAMA.

The second National Festival of Community Drama was organized and carried through by a special committee consisting of: Mr. F. E. Doran, Miss Elsie Fogerty, Mr. C. B. Purdom, Mr. G. Sharman, Mr. C. Harold Ridge and Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth, with the addition of the following, who were the appointed secretaries of the six areas into which the country was divided for the purposes of the competition: Dr. Childs (Scottish Area); Miss Marsland (North-Eastern Area); Mr. Hirst (North-Western Area); Mr. Wale Smith (Midland Area); Mr. Cyril Wood (Southern Area); Mr. C. M. Haines (South-Western Area). 171 Groups competed in all, and Area Festivals were held during November and December at the following centres, preliminary judging having been undertaken locally; Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Birmingham, London and Bristol. By the kindness of the Editor of the *Daily News*, Mr. E. A. Baughan was enabled to accept the Council's invitation to judge the English Area Finals. The Scottish Final was judged by Mr. William Armstrong. The six teams thus selected competed at the Final Festival held at the New Theatre, London, on February 6. The programme was made up as follows:—

Stockport Garrick Society	in "Lonesome-like"	by Harold Brighthouse
Shaston (Shaftesbury) Drama Club	in "The Marrying of William"	by L. du Garde Peach
York Settlement Community Players	in "The Dreamy Kid"	by Eugene O'Neill
Ardrossan and Saltcoats Players' Club	in "The Old Lady Shows her Medals"	by J. M. Barrie
Trecynon Amateur Dramatic Society	in "The Poacher"	by J. O. Francis
The Oxted and Limpsfield Players	in "The Crown of St. Felice"	by F. Sladen-Smith

The judges were Miss Lilian Braithwaite, Mr. E. A. Baughan and Mr. Nigel Playfair, and Miss Braithwaite announced the judges' decision, which awarded the Cup to the Ardrossan and Saltcoats Players' Club. Lord Howard de Walden then presented the Silver Cup to Mr. Woodburn, its representative. This Company has raised sufficient funds to enable them to travel to New York to compete for the David Belasco Cup. It was with great pleasure that the Council learned that the Ardrossan and Saltcoats Players' Club were awarded the David Belasco Cup in America—this being the second year in succession that the Cup has been won by a British team.

The award for the best original play entered in the Festival was awarded to Mr. Philip Johnston for his play, "Legend," produced by the Liverpool Playhouse Circle.

Arrangements are now in hand for the third Festival in 1929.

AUTUMN CONFERENCE.

The Autumn Conference of Affiliated Societies, held in Manchester on October 28 and 29, was attended by a large number of delegates from all over the country.

The Conference opened with a reception by the Lord Mayor of Manchester at the Moseley Street Art Gallery. This was followed by a public meeting held in the Lesser Free Trade Hall under the chairmanship of Mr. Basil Dean. Besides the Chairman, the speakers included Mr. Ivor Brown, Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth and Mr. F. E. Doran, who described at length his scheme for the foundation of a Civic Theatre in Manchester. The following morning and afternoon the business conference was held under the chairmanship of Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth. The full minutes of this meeting were circulated in the December number of *DRAMA*. The scheme for the payment of authors' fees, as drawn up by the special Committee which has been sitting during the year under the chairmanship of Mr. Granville-Barker, was considered and unanimously approved. The scheme is now being considered by the Incorporated Society of Authors.

In accordance with the resolution passed at the Conference that a list of addresses of affiliated societies should be supplied to members of the League, an arrangement has been made for such a list to appear in the Amateur Dramatic Year-Book and Community Theatre Handbook, to be published by Messrs. A. and C. Black. The Year-Book will be edited by Mr. G. W. Bishop, and will be published under the auspices of the British Drama League.

On the evening of October 29 the Conference members were able to see the performance of a triple bill given in the Conference Hall by the Manchester Athenæum Dramatic Society, the Altringham Garrick Society and the W.E.A. Manchester Branch Dramatic Society. On the Sunday afternoon the Un-Named Society invited the delegates to visit the Little Theatre for a performance of five plays given by that Society, and on the Sunday evening the Manchester Playgoers' Club gave a dinner, to which delegates were invited. After the dinner a Debate was held on the National Theatre Scheme. Mr. Holford Knight was the principal speaker, and received a very favourable reception.

During the Conference an exhibition of books relating to the history of the Drama and interesting documents was open to delegates at the John Rylands Library and Central Reference Library.

CARNEGIE TRUST ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

This Committee has met three times, and reports have been made on seven applications.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF THE THEATRE.

The British Section of this Society asked Miss Sybil Thorndike and Mr. Lewis Casson to undertake the representing of British Dramatic Art at the Festival organized in Paris by Monsieur Gemier in June and July last year, and they agreed, at their own charge, to do so. They appeared for a week at the Theatre des Champs Elysées in "Saint Joan" and "Medea" with great artistic success. As a tribute to them, and for a recognition of this public-spirited action, the League organized a public dinner in their honour before their departure to South Africa. It was held at the May Fair Hotel on April 15, and was attended by over 100 guests. Lord Gorell was in the chair, and the speakers were Miss Lilian Braithwaite, Mr. Ben Greet, Mr. St. John Ervine, Lady Bell and Mr. Whitworth. Dame Madge Kendal presented Miss Thorndike with a substantial cheque as a farewell gift from a few friends who were members of the British Drama League.

VILLAGE DRAMA.

The agreement with the Village Drama Society has been completed, and two joint committees have been set up—the Rural Drama Committee and the Committee for Junior Work. Both are now in operation.

EASTER SCHOOL.

The second Easter School for Amateur Producers was organized by Miss Margaret Macnamara at King's College for Women, Campden Hill, from April 11 to 25. Lectures were given by: Mr. Robert Atkins, Mr. Peter Godfrey, Mr. Hubert Griffith, Miss Marjorie Gullan, Mr. Laurence Housman, Dr. L. du Garde Peach, Mr. William Simmonds, Miss Constance Smedley, Mrs. Penelope Wheeler, etc.

Productions were undertaken by Miss Edith Craig and Mr. Norman Marshall. Performances of "Macbeth," "Crabbed Youth and Age," "Trifles," and "Elizabeth Refuses" were given on the last day of the school, and criticized by Mr. William Simmonds.

In connexion with the school, the children of the Hall School, Weybridge, gave two performances of their school play, "Sir Orpheo and Dame Erodys" at the Arts Theatre Club. Sir Michael Sadler spoke at the matinée performance.

MAGAZINE.

The circulation is now approximately 3,600 a month. The Council have recently approved an agreement with Messrs. B. Roberts and Co. whereby that firm will have the exclusive right of contracting for advertisements in DRAMA for a period of not more than three years from July, 1928. It is hoped by this arrangement to double the advertisement revenue which has latterly been obtained. This contract, however, which is manifestly beneficial to the League, rules out the special page of advertisements of amateur productions recommended at the Autumn Conference.

DRAMA AND EDUCATION.

On Thursday, December 29, a meeting of the Conference of Educational Associations at University College, Gower Street, was held, the subject being "The Place of Speech in School Examinations." The speakers included Sir Michael Sadler and Miss Elsie Fogerty.

LECTURES.

To celebrate the Centenary of Ibsen's death a series of Lectures was arranged at the Royal Society of Arts under the patronage of His Excellency the Norwegian Minister. Lectures were given by: Sir Edmund Gosse on "Ibsen the Man"; Chairman, The Norwegian Minister. Professor J. G. Robertson, on "Ibsen's Place in European Literature"; Chairman, Dr. F. S. Boas. Mr. Desmond McCarthy, on "Ibsen the Dramatist"; Chairman, Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth. Miss Elizabeth Robins, on "Ibsen and the Actress"; Chairman, Mr. J. T. Grein. Mr. G. Bernard Shaw, on "Ibsen and After"; Chairman, Dame Madge Kendal.

Prior to the last Lecture a small Exhibition of Ibsen relics was shown in the Library of the Royal Society of Arts. Among the exhibits was a portrait of Ibsen, drawn by George Halkett. This was presented at the close of the exhibition to the Drama League Library by

Mrs. Halkett. Some interesting letters from Ibsen, relics and other mementoes, were lent by Mr. Ashley Dukes, Colonel Archer, Mrs. Bullough, Miss Elizabeth Robins, Madame Jastrow. During the autumn a series of six lectures was also given on Tuesday evenings in the Library of the League on various branches of stagecraft. The lecturers were: Mr. C. B. Purdom on "Play Choosing"; Mr. Ralph Neale on "The Prompt Book"; Mr. Herbert Norris on "Historical Costume"; Miss Edith Craig on "Make-up"; Mr. Peter Godfrey on "Settings and Lighting"; Mr. A. E. Filmer on "Rehearsals."

PLAYS AND PUBLICATIONS.

Regular publication of plays in the British Drama League series has been discontinued. Two volumes of one-act plays already chosen by the Play Publication Committee will, however, be published during 1928. Further volumes will be issued from time to time at the discretion of the Committee.

CRITICAL REPORTS

on 116 plays have been sent to members during the past twelve months.

LECTURES AND PRODUCTION.

Schools of Production have been conducted by Miss Margaret Macnamara at Newcastle and Southampton, and by Miss Macnamara and Mr. Norman Marshall at Brigg (Lincs) and Horsham. Miss Edith Craig, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Harris Davis, Miss Macnamara and Miss Iris Capell have undertaken productions for affiliated societies during the year.

Eight lectures and six adjudications have been given by Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth. Other adjudicators during the year include Miss Macnamara, Mr. Cyril Wood, Mr. Percy Allen, etc.

EXHIBITION AT WHITECHAPEL.

Five models exhibited at the Wembley Exhibition in 1925 were lent for the Exhibition of Theatre Art at the Whitechapel Art Gallery held during January.

THE LIBRARY.

The Library Committee reports further progress in the development of the Library during the past year. 2,126 volumes have been added, bringing the total number of volumes in the Library up to 12,326.

The following statistics of books issued during the year are evidence that members of the League appreciate the value of the Library, and make full use of it. 1926-7: July, 1,328; September, 1,428; January, 1,945; March, 1,889. 1927-8, July, 1,716; September, 1,928; January, 2,353; March, 2,371. The total number of books issued during 1927-8 (21,464) shows an increase of 2,927 over the total of 1926-7 (18,537). A steady increase in the number of sets borrowed is noticeable, 3,787 sets having been sent out during the year.

The new Catalogue is in an advanced stage of preparation, and it is hoped that it will be published in 1929.

The Committee has met at monthly intervals, and has had the benefit of the services of its new members, Mr. H. Rubinstein and Dr. C. J. Sisson.

Among the more notable additions during the past year have been: Pollard and Redgrave, "Short-Title Catalogue of English Books, 1475-1640"; Complete Works of John Webster, edited by F. L. Lucas; Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell, edited by Montague Summers; Plays of Terence, translated by Dr. William Ritchie; George Moore, signed copy of "The Making of an Immortal"; A. Rutherford, "Sixteen Designs for the Theatre"; H. Norris, "Costume and Fashion"; J. Gregor and R. Fulop-Miller, "Das russische Theater"; E. Turner Bell, "Fifty Figure and Character Dances"; C. Hagemann, "Die Kunst der Bühne"; A. B. Klein, "Colour Music"; A. Pougin, "Dictionnaire du Theatre."

It was with great regret that the Committee received in January the resignation of Miss Violet Clayton, on her approaching marriage. They, together with the Council, wish to record their warm appreciation of Miss Clayton's valuable services in the organization and administration of the Library during her three years' term of office. Miss Dorothy Coates has been appointed as her successor.

The Committee and the Council wish to express their grateful thanks to the Liverpool Repertory Theatre and to others who have made presentations of plays to the Library during the present year.

Their thanks are also due to Miss M. Douglass for her valuable help in the Library, and to others who have given voluntary service during the year.

CLIFTON ARTS CLUB DRAMATIC CONTEST

The Clifton Arts Club announce the third year of their Dramatic Contest for original plays. As before, a prize of £5 is offered for the best short play as produced on the stage, and one of £3 for the best short play as judged in manuscript. Entry is open, but entrants for the prize of £5 must be prepared to arrange for the production of their plays at the Clifton Arts Club. Authors who cannot do this may enter for the £3 prize

only at a reduced fee. The play which wins this prize will be produced by the Clifton Arts Club later.

The closing date is September 1. Entries must be made on the specified form, which can be obtained, together with full Rules and all particulars from Mr. C. M. Haines (Hon. Sec., Dramatic Section, Clifton Arts Club), 1 Alexandra Road, Clifton, Bristol.

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NOTICE OF THE
Ninth Annual Meeting
of the
BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE
will be held on

Friday, June 29th, at 2.30 p.m.

in the

Library of the League
8 Adelphi Terrace
London, W.C.2



AGENDA :

1. To pass Annual Report and Balance Sheet
2. Election of Council for the ensuing year
3. Other Business

All members are urged to attend

Affiliated Societies may send two representatives, one of whom may vote

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